



University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra (UTSO)

Peter Min, Matheus Coelho do Nascimento, *conductors*

Uri Mayer, *conductor*

Yunfei Xie, *saxophone*, Winner of the 2025 UTSO Concerto Competition

Saturday, April 4th, 2026 at 7:30pm | Tribute Communities Recital Hall, 83 York Boulevard

The UTSO concerts are made possible in part by a generous gift from Neville Austin.

PROGRAM

Pelléas et Mélisande, op. 80

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

- I. Prélude
- II. Fileuse
- III. Sicilienne
- IV. La mort de Mélisande

Peter Min, *conductor*

Concerto for Alto Saxophone

Henri Tomasi (1901–1971)

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro

Matheus Coelho do Nascimento, *conductor*

Intermission

Symphonie fantastique, op. 14

Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

- I. "Rêveries – Passions" (Daydreams – passions)
- II. "Un bal" (A ball)
- III. "Scène aux champs" (Scene in the country)
- IV. "Marche au supplice" (March to the scaffold)
- V. "Songe d'une nuit du sabbat" (Dream of a night of the sabbath)

Uri Mayer, *conductor*

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Uri Mayer, *conductor*

Violin I

Marija Ivcevic,
concertmaster
Bridget Alexander
Viviana Chan
Katherine Chen
Caleb Chiu
Zelda Faulkes
Natasha Hendra
Cameron Liao
Sophie Reimer-Epp*
Sam Talebi
Boyao (Bryan) Wang
Christine Wang
Mizuki Yaesawa
Nga Yu (Pely) Yau

Violin II

Siri Ducharme-Leblanc*,
principal
Juliette Bhogal
Melie Inageda
Sharon Jin
Aura Kwon
Lauren Da-Hyun Lee
Timothy Jin Seo Li
Elana You-Lan Lin
Natalia (Natasha)
Morozova
Kasey Scoboria
Rosanna Scopacasa
Hoi Ching (Audrey) Sung
Qiqi Zhang

Viola

Viola Szakony, *principal*
Dai Hao (Tony) Chen
Isla Ertl
Yinren (Gavin) Li
Gabriella Caitlyn Liu
Anahit Matevosyan

Cello

Tuuli Olo, *principal*
Trevor Chan
Yuheng (Hasselhoff) Chen
Daniel Ulloa Garcia
Maren Helyar
Hoiyan Law
Sera Lee
Tzu-Chieh (Jill) Liang
Maria (Rebecca) Lima
Yeojin (Chloe) Shin
Mariana Torres Siebiger
Ryan Wu

Double Bass

Jordan Sirvin, *principal*
Sidney Hufton
Jude Littlefield Buschlen
Marcus Wanghin Chan
Kelsey Hopkins

Flute

Ethan Allaire
Rowan Froh
Lauren Radeschi
Rachel Roe-Wu*

Oboe/English Horn

Clara Aristanto
Jamine Noone
Nicholas Pomares

Clarinet

Cheng Cheng
Marco Ding
Farimah Khorrami
Andrzej Jozef Osko

Bassoon/Contrabassoon

Cian Bryson
Kelton Hopper*
Taran Massey-Singh
Jaclyn Yee

Horn

Anik Caissie
Ethan Chialtas
Jessica Lin
Evan Turner

Trumpet/Cornet

Kevin Hayward
Grace Locker
Daniel Rofaiel
Kevin Weijie Zhao

Trombone

Kenzi Ford
Shaela Lundy
Amaya Sydor
Wenxiang (Andy) Wu

Tuba

Harrison Greenaway
Jack Shiels*

Timpani/Percussion

Jon Bilek
Jade Hails
YiHsuan Locker
Bevis Ng
Jerry Yuan

Harp

Hannah Adams
Charlotte Chong
Lexi Hunter-Assing
Emmanuel Luna Wong

*ensemble managers

PROGRAM NOTES

Prepared by Peter Min

Pelléas et Mélisande, op. 80

Gabriel Fauré (May 12, 1845 – November 4, 1924)

Lost in a forest while hunting, Golaud encounters Mélisande—fearful, weeping, and enigmatic. She has cast away her crown and refuses to reveal anything about her past. Golaud brings her back to his castle, where they marry. There, she meets and forms a deep and unspoken bond with his half-brother, Pelléas. Their love remains restrained and only confessed in hushed tones. Golaud, consumed by jealousy, kills Pelléas and wounds Mélisande. In the final act, Mélisande gives birth to a daughter but soon dies, not from her physical wound, but from the grief of losing Pelléas.

Love and tragedy lie at the heart of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a Symbolist play by the Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck. First performed in 1893, the work never achieved great success on stage. However, its drama would inspire several composers, including Fauré, Debussy, Schoenberg, and Sibelius.

Gabriel Fauré was the first of the four composers to write music based on the play. In 1898, Fauré was commissioned to compose incidental music for a London production of the play. Working under considerable time constraints, he produced a score of remarkable refinement, later arranging a four-movement orchestral suite from the original music. This suite, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, stands as one of his most enduring orchestral works.

The *Prélude* creates a sound world of both calm and underlying unease with flowing melodic lines and delicate harmonic shifts. The first theme reflects Mélisande's introverted personality, while the second theme—introduced by the solo cello and woodwinds—represents Mélisande as first seen by her future husband, Golaud. The second movement, "La Fileuse" (The Spinner), depicts Mélisande at her spinning wheel. A gentle oboe melody is accompanied by strings, imitative of the wheel spinning. The third movement, "Sicilienne," offers a moment of lyrical grace. Its gently lilting rhythm and elegant melody are tinged with melancholy. The suite concludes with "La Mort de Mélisande," a movement of profound restraint. Here, Fauré avoids grand gestures of grief, instead portraying Mélisande's death with quiet dignity. The music unfolds with simplicity and tenderness, allowing its emotional weight to emerge through subtle harmonic color and sustained melodic lines.

Throughout the suite, Fauré demonstrates a mastery of orchestral nuance. His textures remain transparent, his melodies understated yet expressive, and his harmonic language rich without excess. In doing so, he captures the essence of Maeterlinck's drama—not through explicit depiction, but through suggestion, atmosphere, and emotional depth.

Concerto for Alto Saxophone

Henri Tomasi (August 17, 1901 – January 13, 1971)

The saxophone, now a staple of concert bands and jazz ensembles alike, is a relatively recent addition to the world of classical music. Invented in the 1840s by the Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax, the instrument was designed to bridge the tonal gap between woodwinds and brass. Despite its versatility and expressive range, the saxophone struggled to find a lasting place in the orchestra, instead gaining prominence in military bands and, later, in jazz. It was not until the twentieth century that composers began to fully explore its potential as a solo instrument in the classical tradition. Orchestral works that feature the saxophone include *La*

Création du monde (Milhaud), *An American in Paris* (Gershwin), *Boléro* (Ravel), and *Waltz No. 2* (Shostakovich).

Among those composers was Henri Tomasi, a French composer and conductor whose music often reflects his Mediterranean heritage and a deeply personal expressive voice. Born in Marseille in 1901, Tomasi studied at the Paris Conservatoire and developed a style that blends lyricism, vivid orchestration, and rhythmic vitality. Though he resisted being labeled, elements of impressionism, neoclassicism, and jazz can be heard throughout his works.

Composed in 1949, Tomasi's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* stands as one of the most significant contributions to the saxophone's classical repertoire. Written for the renowned saxophonist Marcel Mule, a pioneer in establishing the instrument's legitimacy in concert music, the concerto showcases both the technical brilliance and expressive depth of the instrument.

The work unfolds in two main sections, combining traditional concerto elements with a freer, more rhapsodic structure. The opening movement contrasts moments of mysterious and foreboding ambience with bursts of rhythmic energy, allowing the soloist to explore the saxophone's wide range of colors—from warm, vocal-like lines to agile, virtuosic passages. A central cadenza provides a moment of reflection before leading into a lively and dance-like finale, marked by driving rhythms and bright orchestral textures.

In bringing together the relatively young history of the saxophone with his own distinctive musical language, Tomasi crafted a work that is both expressive and virtuosic—one that continues to affirm the saxophone's place on the concert stage.

Symphonie fantastique, op. 14

Hector Berlioz (December 11, 1803 – March 8, 1869)

Love and passion have long served as powerful sources of inspiration for artists, and it was no different for Hector Berlioz and his *Symphonie fantastique*. In this case, however, torment must also be added to the list.

In September 1827, the young composer attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Paris, where he saw the Irish actress Harriet Smithson. "I have just been plunged into an endless, insatiable passion," he wrote to his friend, the poet Humbert Ferrand. "She is still in London, and yet I feel her near." For Berlioz, it was love at first sight—though for several years, that love would remain unrequited.

It was during this period that Berlioz composed *Symphonie fantastique: Épisode de la vie d'un artiste ... en cinq parties* (*Fantastic Symphony: Episode in the Life of an Artist ... in Five Sections*), premiered at the Paris Conservatoire in December 1830. He provided a detailed program for the audience, asserting that it was "indispensable for a complete understanding of the dramatic outline of the work" (a translated version appears at the end of this note). The symphony portrays the romantic anguish of an artist who, in despair over unrequited love, poisons himself with opium. His beloved is represented by the *idée fixe* (fixed idea), a recurring melody that undergoes transformation throughout the work. Needless to say, Berlioz's *idée fixe* represents Harriet Smithson and his own feelings for her.

Despite his fervent devotion, the Shakespearean actress initially rejected all of Berlioz's advances, refusing even to meet him. Perhaps events might have unfolded differently had she attended the premiere of the symphony. It was not until 1832 that she finally took notice, when a mutual acquaintance invited her to a concert featuring Berlioz's music, including the overture of *Les Francs-juges*, a revised *Symphonie fantastique*, and its sequel, *Lélio*. Realizing she had

been the inspiration for the symphony, she was moved to reconsider her earlier rejections. The two were married at the British Embassy in Paris in 1833.

Although their early years together were happy, the marriage ultimately faltered. Family opposition, combined with the fact that neither learned to be fluent in the other's language, created lasting strain. Even after their formal separation in 1844, Berlioz never did completely leave her, taking care of the woman he once so arduously loved until her death in 1854.

Symphonie fantastique expanded the dramatic scope of the symphony, and its many innovations reflect Berlioz's distinctive musical imagination. His melodies are often simple yet deeply expressive, unfolding in long, lyrical phrases—qualities exemplified by the *idée fixe*. He juxtaposes contrasting harmonies to create striking textures and atmospheres, characteristic of the French Romantic style. His orchestration is equally inventive: the exchange between the English horn and offstage oboe in the "Scene in the Country," and the use of *col legno* (striking the strings with the wood of the bow) to evoke dancing skeletons in the "Witches' Sabbath," are just two memorable examples. Together, these elements create a vivid and intensely dramatic narrative of love, passion, and torment.

Berlioz's program notes for *Symphonie fantastique*

Part One: Dreams – Passions

The author imagines that a young musician, afflicted with that moral disease that a well-known writer calls the *vague des passions*, sees for the first time a woman who embodies all the charms of the ideal being he has imagined in his dreams, and he falls desperately in love with her. Through an odd whim, whenever the beloved image appears before the mind's eye of the artist, it is linked with a musical thought whose character, passionate but at the same time noble and shy, he finds similar to the one he attributes to his beloved.

The melodic image and the model it reflects pursue him incessantly like a double *idée fixe*. That is the reason for the constant appearance, in every movement of the symphony, of the melody that begins the first Allegro. The passage from this state of melancholy reverie, interrupted by a few fits of groundless joy, to one of frenzied passion, with its gestures of fury, of jealousy, its return of tenderness, its tears, its religious consolations - this is the subject of the first movement.

Part Two: A Ball

The artist finds himself in the most varied situations – in the midst of *the tumult of a party*, in the peaceful contemplation of the beauties of nature; but everywhere, in town, in the country, the beloved image appears before him and disturbs his peace of mind.

Part Three: A Scene in the Country

Finding himself one evening in the country, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *ranz des vaches* in dialogue. This pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently brushed by the wind, the hopes he has recently found some reason to entertain - all concur in affording his heart an unaccustomed calm, and in giving a more cheerful color to his ideas. He reflects upon his isolation; he hopes that his loneliness will soon be over. - But what if she were deceiving him! – This mingling of hope and fear, these ideas of happiness disturbed by black presentiments, form the subject of the Adagio. At the end, one of the shepherds again takes up the *ranz des vaches*; the other no longer replies. – Distant sound of thunder – loneliness – silence.

Part Four: March to the Scaffold

Convinced that his love is unappreciated, the artist poisons himself with opium. The dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a sleep accompanied by the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned and led to the scaffold, and that he is witnessing *his own execution*. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in which the muffled noise of heavy steps gives way without transition to the noisiest clamor. At the end of the march the first four measures of the *idée fixe* reappear, like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

Part Five: Dream of a Witch's Sabbath

He sees himself at the sabbath, in the midst of a frightful troop of hosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, come together for his funeral. Strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again, but it has lost its character of nobility and shyness; it is no more than a dance tune, mean, trivial, and grotesque: it is she, coming to join the sabbath. - A roar of joy at her arrival. - she takes part in the devilish orgy. - Funeral knell, burlesque parody of the *Dies irae* [a hymn formerly sung in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church], *sabbath round-dance*. The sabbath round and the *Dies irae* are combined.

BIOGRAPHIES

Yunfei Xie is a classical saxophonist from Beijing. He is currently pursuing a Master of Music (MM) degree under Professor Chien-Kwan Lin at the Eastman School of Music. A versatile performer, he excels as a soloist, chamber musician, and experienced band player. He earned his Bachelor's degree in saxophone performance from the University of Toronto, studying with Professor Wallace Halladay.

With more than ten years dedicated to the saxophone, Yunfei had secured multiple first prizes at the Beijing Art Festival of College Students, both as leader of a symphonic band and of a saxophone quartet. He was also the winner of the 2023 University of Toronto Wind Concerto Competition. Yunfei has also studied with world-renowned saxophonists including Claude Delangle, Arno Bornkamp, Timothy McAllister, Simon Diricq, Kenneth Radofsky, and Vincent David.

Yunfei is also a teaching assistant in saxophone at the Eastman School of Music, where he teaches multiple students at the Eastman Community Music School. He also serves as the director of the New Horizons Saxophone Ensemble, and is a founding member of the Toronto Saxophone Collective.

Chung Ki **Peter Min** is a Korean-Canadian conductor and composer currently pursuing his master's degree in orchestral conducting at the University of Toronto under the tutelage of Uri Mayer. He holds a Bachelor of Music from McGill University, with a double major in music composition and theory.

Peter's compositions have been performed at various festivals, including the Tuckamore Festival in St. John's, Newfoundland; Zodiac Festival in Valdeblorre, France; and the Impulse New Music Festival in Los Angeles. Having studied with the distinguished Canadian composer Brian Cherney, Peter takes a special interest in studying and performing contemporary Canadian repertoire and new music by living composers.

Recent conducting engagements include performances with the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra, York Region Youth Orchestra, Saratoga Orchestra at the Pacific Northwest Conducting Institute. Peter has also participated in the Girton Conducting Course and the Conductor's Retreat at Medomak.

Matheus Coelho is a Brazilian-born conductor, baritone, and clarinetist, currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Orchestral Conducting at the University of Toronto, where he studies with Maestro Uri Mayer. He serves as Assistant Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and is Music Director and Conductor of the York Region Youth Orchestra.

An alumnus of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra Academy of Music, Matheus studied under the renowned conductor Marin Alsop and has worked with distinguished artists including Sian Edwards, Neil Thomson, Cristian Măcelaru, and Giancarlo Guerrero. His conducting experience includes masterclasses and performances with professional ensembles such as the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, the Minas Gerais Philharmonic, and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.

Active throughout the Greater Toronto Area, Matheus has appeared in a wide range of engagements, including his debut with the Toronto Operetta Theatre and performances with the University of Toronto Contemporary Music Ensemble, among others. In addition to his work as a vocalist and instrumentalist, he has held Music Director and Assistant Conductor positions with several ensembles, including the Experimental Camerata of Campinas, the University of Manitoba Symphony Orchestra, the Campinas University Symphony Orchestra, and the Unicamp Opera Studio.

Uri Mayer, Professor and Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto since 2014, has taught on the faculties of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Rice University Shepherd School of Music in Houston, McGill University in Montreal and at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music (GGS).

Renowned for his strong command of broad symphonic, operatic, and ballet repertoire, Mayer has guest conducted many of the leading orchestras around the world including the Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver symphonies in Canada, the Houston and Utah symphonies in the U.S.A., London Mozart Players and the English Symphony Orchestra, NDR Philharmonie in Hannover, Slovak Philharmonic, Budapest, Belgrade and Sophia Philharmonics, Israel Philharmonic, NHK Orchestra and Osaka Symphony in Japan and National Symphony of Taiwan. He served as the Principal Conductor of the Kansai Philharmonic Orchestra in Osaka, Japan and the Artistic Director of the Israel Sinfonietta. In Canada, Mayer was Music Director of the Edmonton Symphony and Orchestra London. He has led numerous opera productions in Canada, the U.S.A., the Netherlands, Hungary, and Israel including *The Barber of Seville*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Salome* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Some of the distinguished soloists who have collaborated with him include Elly Ameling, Kathleen Battle, Maureen Forrester, Frederica von Stade, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Peter Oundjian, Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma, Claudio Arrau, Emanuel Ax and Sir Andrés Schiff. Mayer has recorded for the Arabesque, CBC, Denon Japan, Hungaroton and Koch labels. Under his direction the Edmonton Symphony became one of Canada's most frequently heard orchestras on radio. They were awarded the Grand Prix du Disque-Canada for the recording *Orchestral Suites of the British Isles* and nominated for a Juno Award for Great Verdi Arias with Louis Quilico. In 2009, the University of Western Ontario conferred on Mayer a Doctor of Music Honoris causa in recognition of his contribution to the musical life in Canada.

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